THE ORTHODOX WORD

No. 95

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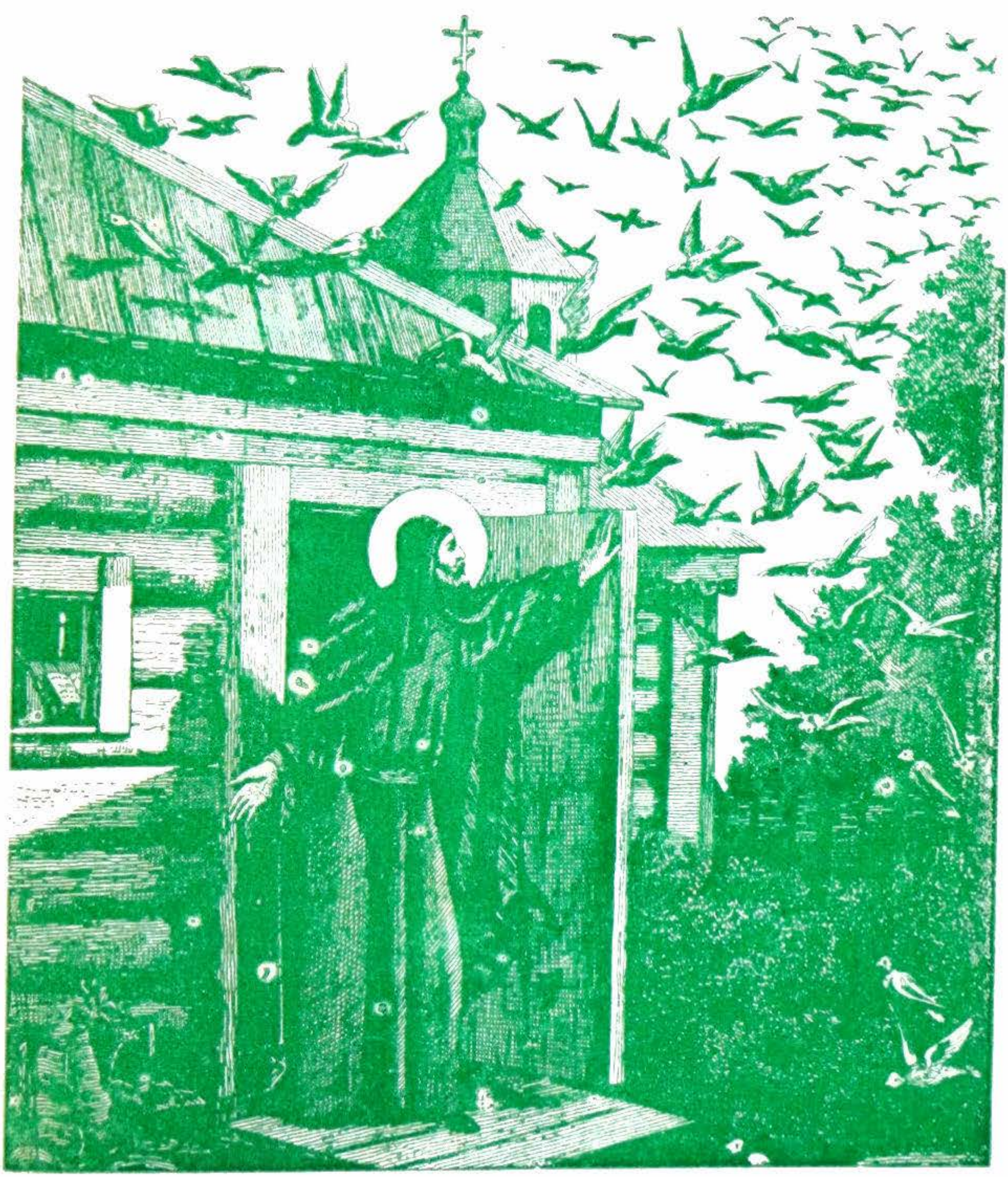

Letters

HELP FOR UGANDA

Many people have responded to appeals in The Orthodox Word *and other Orthodox periodicals to help the suffering Orthodox Christians in Uganda, who are undergoing severe trials from drought, extreme poverty, and political disorders. However, the disorders there are so great that some attempts to help have resulted in failure. The U.S. Post Office will not sell insurance on parcels to Uganda, and some post offices refuse even to accept parcels of used clothing; in Uganda itself, parcels are often stolen before they reach the addressees; the U.S. Post Office will not sell International Money Orders for Uganda.*

However, letters usually do reach the addressees, and personal checks *(in American dollars or any major free world currency) seem to be the surest way to help (the returned check guaranteeing that the money has arrived). All checks sent to Bishop Theodorous in Kampala (and made out to his name) are acknowledged by a written receipt (and usually by a copy of the Uganda Orthodox newsletter), and we recommend readers to send contributions directly to him:*

Rt. Rev. Bishop Theodorous
Nankyama
P.O. Box 3970
Kampala, Uganda

In addition, specific contributions for medical supplies *for the Uganda Orthodox may be sent to:*

Uganda Orthodox Missionary Fund
International Dispensary Association
P.O. Box 2000-1000
Amsterdam
NETHERLANDS

We ask our readers to inform us if they have found any safe means of sending clothes or food (both of which are extremely scarce there, even if money is available) to addresses in Uganda.

The following three recent appeals from Uganda are printed here so that readers might at least send a note of encouragement to these sufferers, and if possible help in a more substantial way. Airmail letters to Uganda are now 40¢ for one-half ounce; air letters (no enclosures allowed) are 30¢.

APPEALS FROM ORPHANS

In our capacity as orphans we humbly request you, fathers. We have lost hope for future prosperity, and we wish to seek help from you. We were going to school, but now books are very high and ex-

(Continued on page 271)

From this day, from this hour,
from this minute, let us strive
to love God above all,
and fulfill His holy will.

THE ORTHODOX WORD

For the Mission of True Orthodox Christianity

A Bimonthly Illustrated Periodical
of the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood

Established with the blessing of His Eminence
the late *John (Maximovitch)*, Archbishop of
Western America and San Francisco, Russian
Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

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November-December

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COVER: 19th century engraving of St. Sergius. Used as the covers for both the English and Greek editions of *The Northern Thebaid*.

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"The Northern Thebaid" in Greek

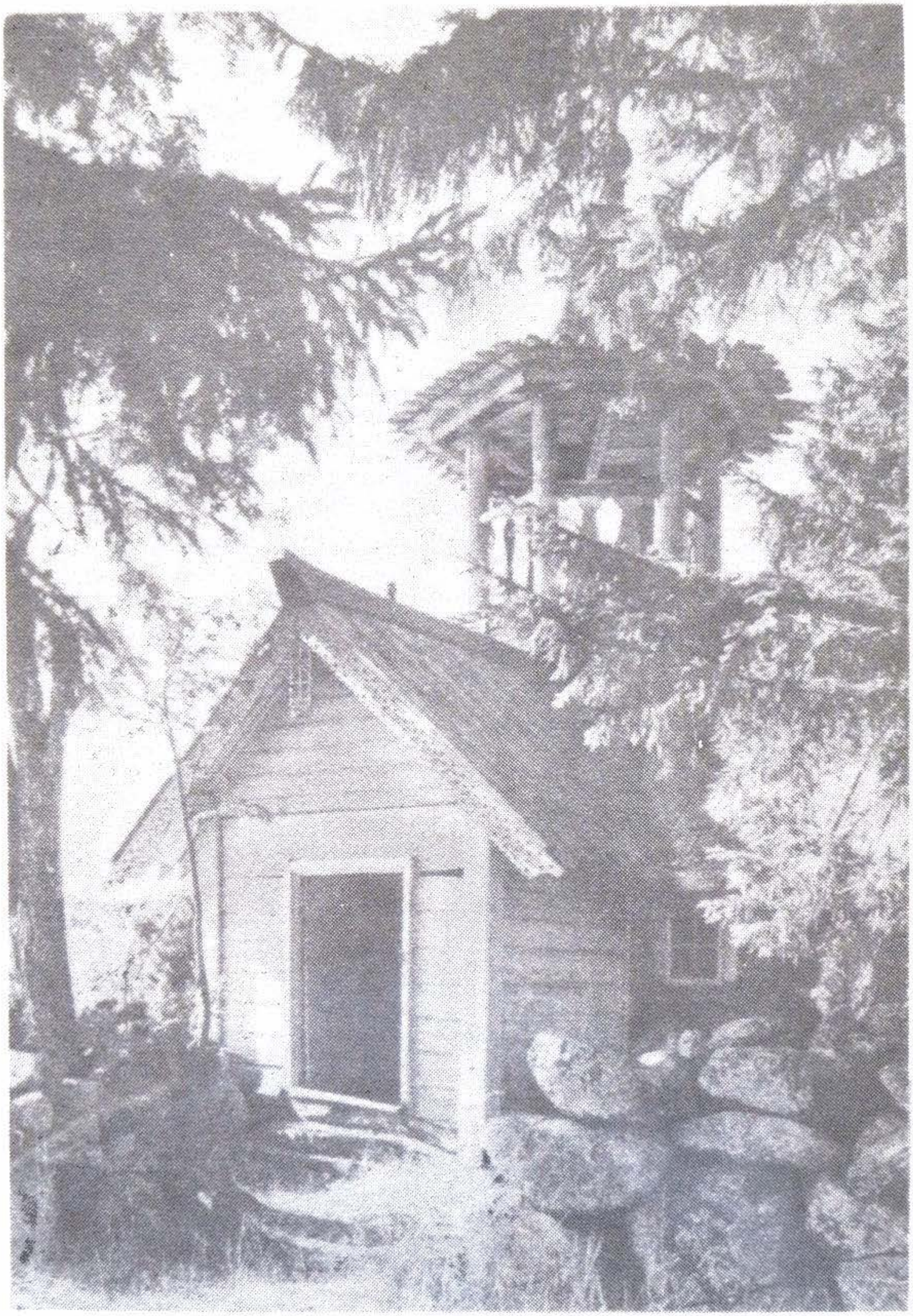
In 1975, the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood published The Northern Thebaid, *a collection of twelve Lives of monastic saints of the Russian North. Now this book has appeared in its entirety in Greek, with the following introductory words.*

THE FOREWORD TO THE GREEK EDITION

The translation into Greek of the present book comprises a great offering to the faithful Greek people. It is the first work that with such completeness recounts the wondrous life of the great ascetics of ancient Russia, that rightly is called "The Northern Thebaid." For many reasons it is a special blessing for us to become acquainted with our co-religionists, the Russian instructors and citizens of the desert. We will be inspired and strengthened in our own struggle. The indolent and negligent will wake up. The strugglers and runners will become more eager. We all will receive the blessing of these friends of God of whom until today we were ignorant. Now that we will know of them, we can ask their intercessions for the divine mercy to come upon us.

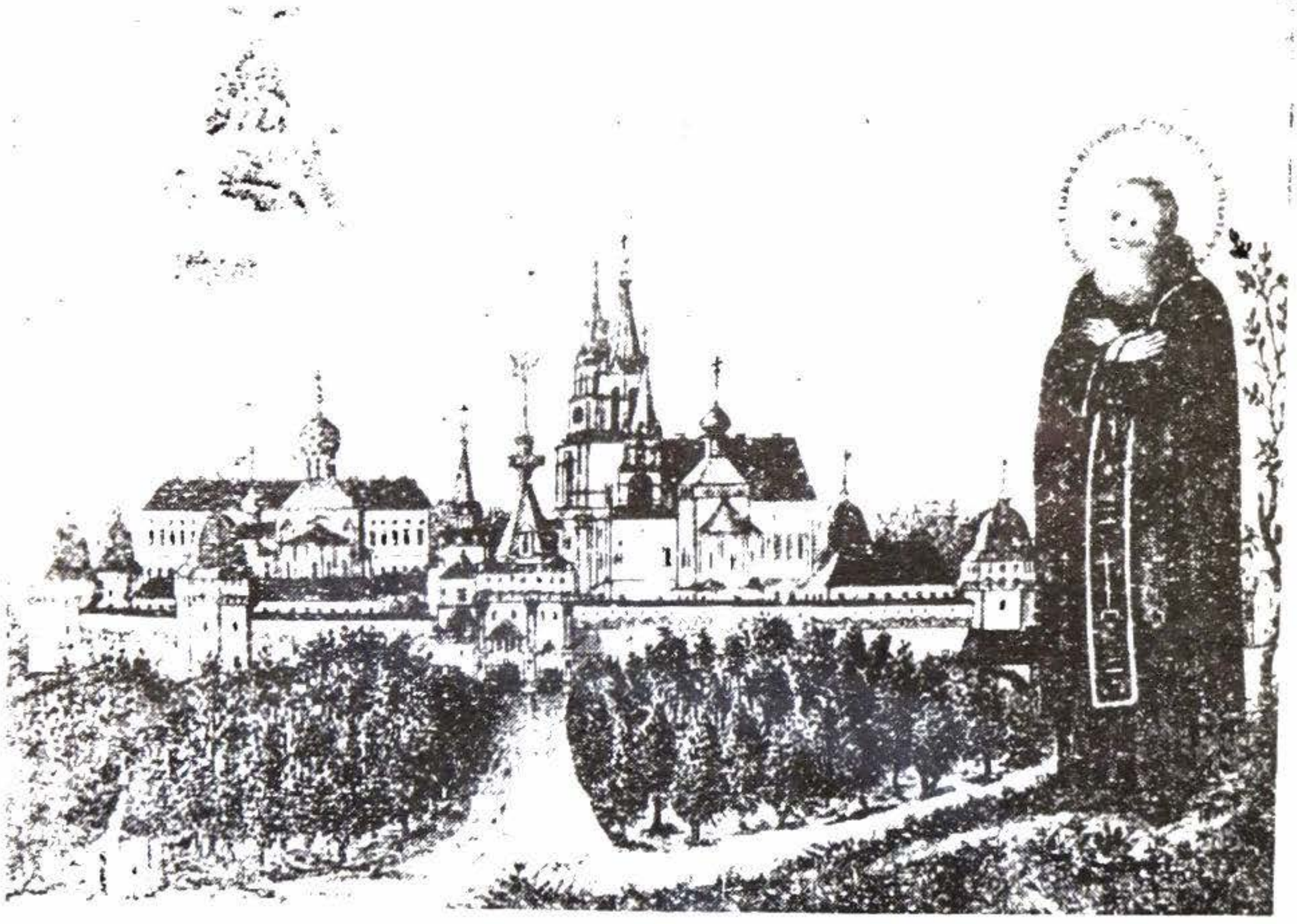
By glorifying the Saints, the Lord is more glorified, because, according to the Prophet-King, "Wondrous is God in His Saints." Our Holy Orthodox Church is also glorified that among the peoples the Church had enlisted, it raised up so many children of God. Orthodox hesychastic monasticism, Greek-Orthodox Byzanti-

(Continued on page 259)



A forlorn skete church in the Kargopol region
in the heart of the Northern Thebaid

General view of Solovki Monastery before 1917



St. Sabbas, disciple of St. Sergius of Radonezh,
and his Storozhevsk Monastery

(Continued from page 256)

um, the Holy Mountain, and the pious Russian people are able to boast in the Lord because they worked together with Divine Grace and succeeded in writing this new epic of the Holy Spirit.

The Saints mentioned here are the children of Orthodoxy. They accepted without question Orthodox dogma, Orthodox piety, Orthodox worship and Orthodox monasticism. The syncretism of ecumenism that today wants to put Orthodoxy on the same level as Papism and Protestantism deliberately conceals the truth, that true holiness and Orthodox spiritual life are not possible to achieve outside of Orthodoxy.

This book is today especially timely and useful because it reveals what a high spiritual civilization Orthodox people can create when they conduct themselves in an Orthodox fashion.

The contemporary dreary Western "humanism," neither an Orthodox nor Christian civilization, which is based on self-love and egoism, leads man to a dead-end, to chaos and to nothingness.

Orthodox civilization that is given birth in the Orthodox Church is based on humility and love. It makes men gods according to grace and redirects people towards the heavenly Fatherland. These men have in their hearts peace, and don't fear death.

The Saints are guides and teachers of people. They are also intercessors to Almighty God, physicians of souls and bodies, signs of the love of God to man and of the possibility for man of higher spiritual achievements.

This book calls us to throw off the foreign influences of atheism and of materialism, applied and theoretical, which threaten our Orthodox people and for us to return to the truly maternal embrace of Orthodoxy. Let us feel its sweetness and its delightfulness. Let us be saved from the self-ordained "saviours" and "benefactors" of either the West or the East who are directing us.

Whoever will read this book, may he glorify the Lord Who also in the Russian land made to blossom such sweet flowers and may he pray for our Russian Orthodox brethren who have mounted the Cross of martyrdom for their love of the Lamb Who is offered to us for Food.

The Kathegoumenos of the Holy Coenobitic
Monastery on Athos of St. Gregory,
Archimandrite George

July 20, 1980,
the day of remembrance of the
holy Prophet Elias the Thesbite

A FEW WORDS FOR THE GREEK EDITION,
FROM THE EDITORS OF THE ENGLISH EDITION

Our Brotherhood is pleased to offer to Greek-speaking readers "The Northern Thebaid," a collection of monastic lives from the "golden age" of Russian monasticism, the 14th to 17th centuries. In its two printings in the English language it has helped to inspire Orthodox Christians in the Western world with the ideals of Orthodox monasticism and with love and veneration for the great fathers and mothers who have lived such angel-like lives on earth. Even in these latter times, when we no longer see such lives on earth, the remembrance of these great strugglers of the past is a source of great inspiration and spiritual help for us. Even if no one today, perhaps, *lives* as they did, we may yet hope that our love for and prayer to them will yet gain us God's mercy for our sinful souls.

It was from Greece that the saints whose lives are here recounted received both the Orthodox Faith and the monastic tradition, both of which were transmitted to the American land by St. Herman of Alaska. May the publication of this book now equally be a source of inspiration to the descendents of those who gave Orthodoxy and monasticism to the Russian North; may it serve for an increase of love among Orthodox people, and for the salvation of souls! *

Holy Monastery of St. Herman of Alaska,
Platina, California, U.S.A.

* The Greek translation of *The Northern Thebaid* may be obtained for 300 drachmas from *Orthodoxos Typos*, Lesvou 27, Athens 805, Greece.

The Suffering of the Holy Martyr Zosimas, the Desert-Dweller

September 19*

Once Dometian, the governor of Cilicia, set off together with his servants on a hunt, and he went through many desert places, hills, and mountains, chasing wild animals and catching them. And then, in one place, he saw a multitude of wild animals, in the midst of which an elder was walking and conversing with them as with people. The hunters threw themselves upon them, and when the beasts fled, they took the elder and brought him to the prince, thinking that he was a sorcerer and was performing sorcery in the wilderness.

They asked him who he was and what his name was. The Saint replied, "I am a Christian and my name is Zosimas."

Then they bound and lead him to the city for judgment. Here the prince began to question him about sorcery and magic, and about how he had so enchanted the wild beasts that he lived in their midst unharmed and conversed with them as with people.

---

* Taken from the Russian *Lives of Saints*.

Zosimas replied, "It is not for sorcery that I live in the wilderness; but, being myself a Christian, I cannot live in the city with unbelievers, and therefore I went into the wilderness, desiring rather to be with wild beasts than with evil men – the enemies of my Lord Jesus Christ. Having as an example of such a life the lives of other Christians, the Holy Fathers who went away from the world and lived in the desert, I also have strived to imitate them as far as I have been able. God Who knows those who serve Him and takes providential care for them, and Who has dealt with me in His goodness, subjected to me for my consolation the wild animals; and behold, I live with them rejoicing in the Lord, and placing in Him all my hope."

To this the prince replied, "So, you evil old man, you worship the Nazarene? All right then, I will go to Nazareth, and there I will cruelly torture you, so that you will either renounce the Nazarene or else in cruel sufferings you will lose your life; and let those in Nazareth, seeing your tortures, learn to fear."

And he first sent St. Zosimas to Nazareth in chains, and then set out himself for there. Having chosen a time for judgment, Dometian commanded that Zosimas be brought forth, and he asked him: "Tell us about your sorcery; how do you enchant the animals?"

Zosimas in reply confessed that he was a Christian. Then the prince commanded that the Saint be hung with his head downwards, that a large stone be tied around his neck, and that his body be scraped with iron claws.

After this he again asked, "Now will you tell us about your sorcery?"

To this Zosimas said, "Christ my God it is Who sent the wild beasts to console me in the wilderness."

The prince said to him, "If the wild beasts obey your God, then command that just one wild beast come here; then we will accept your faith."

Zosimas raised his pure hands to heaven and began to pray: "O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, hear me, Thy servant, and send here a lion so that he might serve me."

And suddenly a fierce lion came racing into the city, and all, seeing him, fled in all directions. The lion however, going up to Zosimas, began to hold the stone which had been bound to his neck. Then the prince began to entreat the Saint: "Zosimas, tame the beast and we will loose you."

Zosimas commanded the beast to become meek, and the prince ordered the Saint to be unbound and wished to send him to the Emperor. But Zosimas gave over to God his spirit. The Christians buried with honour the body of the Saint, glorifying the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Who is glorious unto the ages. Amen.

The suffering of St. Zosimas occurred at the beginning of the fourth century, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian. The memory of St. Zosimas the Desert-Dweller is also celebrated on the 4th of January, together with St. Athanasius the superintendent of prisoners, who, seeing Zosimas unharmed after his terrible sufferings, believed in Christ and after labors of prayer, gave his soul over to his Lord in the desert. St. Zosimas did not die immediately after enduring the tortures from Dometian, but peacefully gave his soul to the Lord there in the desert, together with St. Athanasius, in the cleft of a rock.

VITA PATRUM

(THE LIFE OF THE FATHERS)

CHAPTER NINE

Saint Patroclus the Abba

DESERT-DWELLER OF BOURGES

by SAINT GREGORY OF TOURS

When, following the precept from the mouth of the Lord Himself, the remarkable wisdom of the Prophet Moses prepared to build a tabernacle to Divine Providence and to accumulate quantities of material under this charge, since he did not have all those things which were necessary, he ordered that there be made known to the people what the Lord had commanded him on the mountaintop, so that each one should come forward to offer according to his means some gift to God, without constraint, but rather freely (Ex. 25:2). Thus they offered pieces of gold and silver, bronze, iron, beautiful shining gems, double skeins of fine linen, and double cords of purple. Some brought ram skins tinted red, and fleeces.

But as the teachers of the Church have handed down to us that all these things are allegorical and that they signify different kinds of graces, even comparing our words of praise to those fleeces, we, who are devoid of vision, unused to study, and negligent in deed, offer neither gold nor silver nor gems nor double skeins or cords; but at least let us give fleeces, that is, let us set forth those accounts which make known the miracles of the saints and friends of God in the Holy Church, so that those who read might be induced to follow the way by which the saints were worthy to mount up to Heaven. Thus, since an account recently giv-

en to us teaches us several things about the life of blessed Patroclus, I have thought it best not omitted but told; and despite a poor style, I have nevertheless not thought to hide what God has accomplished by His servant.

1. The most blessed Patroclus, an inhabitant of Bourges, was the son of Aetherius. When he was ten years old he was appointed to tend the sheep, since his brother Anthony was given over to the study of letters. He was not, it is true, of the high nobility; even so, he was of a free state. One noontime they had both come to take their meal in their father's house, the one coming from the school and the other from the fields where he was watching the flock. Anthony said to his brother, "Stand off a little, peasant. It is for you to pasture the sheep, and for me to exercise myself in letters. The care of such an office ennobles me, whereas that service of watching flocks makes you low." Hearing this, and regarding this reproach as sent from God Himself, Patroclus left the sheep in the field and betook himself in haste and with resolve to the school for children. Upon being taught the fundamentals and then all that is necessary for the study of children, he learned so rapidly, thanks to his memory, that he surpassed his brother both in knowledge and in quickness of spirit, assisted therein by Divine help. Thereafter he was recommended for study to Nunnionus (who formerly enjoyed great favor with Childebert, king of the Parisians). He was brought up by him with the concern of the highest love, and Patroclus showed himself so modest and submissive to all, that everyone cherished him with the tenderness of a parent.

Returning home after the death of his father, he found his mother still living. She said to him, "Now that your father is dead, my sweetest son, I am living without solace. So I am going to look for a pretty young girl, of a free state, for you to marry and you will be able to provide solace to your mother in her widowhood." But he answered: "I will not join myself to a wife in this world, but I will carry out what my spirit has conceived with the Lord's will." And when his mother, who did not understand him, asked him what that meant, he did not want to explain, but went to find Arcadius, bishop of the city of Bourges, and begged him to

tonsure him and admit him to the rank of the clerics; which the bishop, by the Lord's will, did without delay

A little later exercising the office of deacon, he gave himself over to fastings, loved vigils, and occupied himself in reading, and so plunged himself in continual prayer that he did not come with the other clerics to take his meals at the table, as the rule was. Hearing of this, the archdeacon was angry at him and said, "Either take your meal with your brothers, or you are certainly going to go away from us. For it is not seemly that you refuse to eat with those with whom you are reckoned to fulfill the ecclesiastical office."

2. God's servant was not disturbed in soul by these words, seeing that he already ardently desired to retire into the solitude of the wilderness. Thus, having gone out from Bourges, he came to the village of Neris, and there he built an oratory, consecrated by the relics of Saint Martin, where he began to instruct children in the study of letters. The infirm also came to him, and they were healed, as well as the possessed, who were delivered after having confessed his name.

But he had not yet found the solitude he was looking for, and the people made his virtue known everywhere. Therefore, to receive a sign, he wrote out little slips which he placed on the altar, keeping vigil and praying for three nights, in order that what the Lord ordered him to do He would vouchsafe to reveal to him clearly. But the great mercy of the Divine goodness, which knew in advance what he would be, had resolved that he be a hermit, and caused him to take the slip which would hasten his way into the wilderness.

Accordingly, he gathered virgins and established a women's monastery in that cell where he had been living, carrying away when he left nothing from all he had amassed there by his labor except a rake and a double-bitted axe. And having entered into the deep solitude of the forests, he came to the place called Mediocantus, built himself a cell there, and continuing the work of which we spoke above, gave himself over to God.

And because in that location he rendered of sound mind many of the possessed and cast out the demons with the imposition of his hand

through the sign of the Cross, there was brought to him a ferocious man who, with his mouth open wide and his teeth bloody, tore with his own teeth all that he could get hold of. Having prostrated himself in prayer for three days for this man, he obtained the authority from the Divine mercy to make the man's fury abate, to free him from the danger of death, and to restore him to health by placing his fingers in the man's mouth, casting out the deadly, vicious spirit. Truly the imposture of the wicked seducer had no power against him.

And just as he cleansed those who were possessed, so he also repulsed by the power of the most holy Cross those things which the wicked author of crime prepared in secret. During the *inguinariam* plague of which we have already spoken, the devil, in the appearance of St. Martin, had wickedly brought to a woman named Leubella the offerings which he said would save the people. But as soon as they had been shown to Saint Patroclus, not only did they vanish by a revelation of the Holy Spirit, but the frightful perpetrator of evil appeared to the Saint and confessed to him all his evil actions.

Often, it is true, the devil transforms himself into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14) in order to deceive the innocent with that fraud; and, as he laid out for Patroclus many snares to hinder him from rising up to that place from which he himself had fallen, he sent him the thought of leaving the wilderness and returning to the world. The Saint, feeling the poison creeping into his heart, prostrated himself in prayer, asking to do nothing which was not pleasing to God. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said to him: "If you wish to behold the world, see this column, climbing which you will behold all that is happening there." And in this dream there was before him a column of marvelous height which he climbed, and from there he saw the homicides, the thefts, the murders, the adulteries, the fornications, and all the crimes which occur in the world. When he came down he said, "I beg Thee, O Lord, that I not return to these abominations which for a long time I have forgotten in order to confess Thee." Then the angel who was speaking to him said, "Then stop seeking after the world, lest you perish with it, but rather go into the oratory where you will pray to the Lord,

and what you find there will be for you a great consolation in your pilgrimage." When he entered the oratory, he found a clay tile on which was the image of the Cross of the Lord; and recognizing the Divine gift, he understood that this would be for him as an impregnable defense against the attractions of all worldly seduction.

3. After this Saint Patroclus built the monastery of Columbariense, five miles from the cell which he was inhabiting in the wilderness, and there gathering monks, he instituted an abbot who would shepherd the monastic flock, so that he himself might be able to watch over himself more freely in solitude. He spent eighteen years in this wilderness place. Then, after having brought together the brethren to announce to them his passing, he died in a pious old age and in extraordinary sanctity. Finally, his body was washed and placed on a litter, and he was carried to his monastery, where he had ordered when still alive that he be buried.

Then the archpriest of the village of Neris, having assembled a group of clerics, wished to carry off the Saint's body by force in order that it might be buried in the village from which he had come. But while he was coming, filled with enthusiasm, he saw from afar the pall which covered the Saint's limbs and which was of a shining whiteness. And, by God's leave, he was so frightened that he immediately put out of mind what he had improperly and lightmindedly conceived, and joining himself to those who were chanting the office at the Saint's funeral, he, together with the other brothers present, buried him in the monastery of Columbariense.

At the Saint's tomb a blind woman named Prudence and a girl from Limoges, likewise deprived of sight, were granted to receive light as soon as they had kissed the holy tomb. After five years of blindness, Maxonidius went to the holy tomb and also received light. The possessed persons Lupus, Theodulfus, Rucco, Scopilia, Nectariola, and Tacihilde were cleansed at the Saint's tomb. There were also two girls from Limoges who, having been rubbed with oil which the Saint had blessed, were delivered from the malignant spirit which beset them. And there every day the Lord, Who constantly glorifies His saints, works miracles to confirm the faith of the people.

NOTES

St. Gregory has a short account of St. Patroclus' life in *The History of the Franks* (V, 10), which contains a little more information about him:

"In the neighborhood of Bourges there lived a recluse called Patroclus. He had been ordained a priest and was a man of remarkable holiness and piety, and of great abstinence, too: he was always being plagued with this illness or that through his fasting. He would not drink wine, or cider, or anything else which could intoxicate, taking only water slightly sweetened with honey. He would eat no animal food. His staple diet was bread soaked in water and sprinkled with salt. His eyes were never closed in sleep. He prayed unceasingly, or, if he stopped praying for a moment, he spent the time reading or writing. By prayer he would often cure those suffering from fevers, boils or other maladies. He performed many other miracles which it would take me a long time to relate. He always wore a hair-shirt next to his body. He was eighty years old when he died and went to join Christ" (Lewis Thorpe tr., Penguin Books, 1974, p. 265).

He died in 577.

The Bishop Arcadius of Bourges who ordained him to the rank of cleric is known to have attended the Council of Orleans in 538.

The monastery of Columbariense (Columbier in French) became a dependency in turn of several larger monasteries, including the famous Cluny. A romanesque church dedicated to St. Patroclus remains at Columbier, and still has some columns from the 11th and 12th centuries.

The place of St. Patroclus' solitary cell five miles from Columbier is still known by the name of La Celle.

(Continued from p. 254)

pensive. We don't know how we will go on in our studies We were left lonely to face this world. But indeed we found at length that life is not worth living in our country Uganda, and that's why we have written this letter so you can help us. Having witnessed the instability of our country, our progress remains abortive, and hence we are in an uncertain state of mind. The cost of living here is very high; this leaves us in a bad state. Fathers, with respect we wait for your help, and we trust it will be our great pleasure to receive it warmly.

Sincerely, your suffering orphan,
Frederick Mutebi

Dear Fathers,

I am seeking for help or assistance. First, I have to mention the great personal pleasure I confronted in the course of reading the Bible you sent. Now I do believe our relationship has been cultivated, and no doubt it will rise above the human to the level of the spiritual; that is, if God wishes, Who is the only way to our betterment. However, life here has been altogether difficult.

Coming to the point, I am an orphan who has lost hope of future prosperity. By all means life here is not worth living in my country. The cost of living has risen to a level one cannot imagine, and I cannot think what will happen next. Essential commodities are not available, and my financial condition remains poor. And thus I almost have no clothes to wear and indeed, food is not enough. What I know is that there is no lack of challenge and opportunity for you to do good to me, if you have the mind to do so.

I am a young man small in size. I use medium size shirts and trousers. Another problem for me at this moment: I wonder whether I should resume wearing the so-called footwear; I used to wear size 7.

With respect, I trust it will be my great pleasure to receive your help soon. Thanking you in anticipation.

Your suffering orphan,
Minjo Willis

The address of both orphans is:

Kitunga Primary School
P.O. Box 38
Bulongo via Jinja
Uganda

ORTHODOX BOOKS FOR UGANDA

I humbly beg your sympathetic consideration. After having searched and struggled for a number of years for books on our church history and other religious books, I came across your book of 1975 entitled *The Northern Thebaid*, where I got your address.

Frequently I wrote to the Greek Orthodox Missionary Society in

Thessalonika, requesting them to assist me with some Orthodox books, but in vain. Then I tried in some corners of America, but all were the same.

Kindly here, I appeal to you to assist me with church history and other Orthodox books. I am very much interested in books, mostly concerning our religion.

In addition, allow me to let you know that I am a lame man who was assaulted by thieves on 11th August, 1978. Since then I was confined to bed in a hospital until 17th March, 1980.

Thus, my brothers in Christ, I request your assistance, if there is any possibility you can, for I am almost going naked. I hope that my requests will meet your sympathetic consideration and attention, by the will of our Almighty God.

I remain yours in love of Christ.

Ssozi Gwolyanaye Revoctus
P.O. Box 1956
Jinja, Uganda

THE NORTHERN THEBAID

I can't express how much I enjoy *The Orthodox Word* and in particular the articles on the Saints of the wilderness. People in the West have little idea of the brave and extensive penetration made by the Russian Church into those vast and wild expanses. I think those holy men were remarkable.

The writing in *The Orthodox Word* is always gripping and inspiring. My own background is Protestant, and in addition we have Roman Catholic relatives, but to me Protestantism is dead and uninspiring and Romanism is bleak and sterile. I've always been drawn to the Orthodox Church, especially the Russian Church, but I can't explain why. It seems to be a matter of spirit. It has life and soul which the Western churches are lacking.

Reading about the suffering endured by those in the Soviet Union is heartrending, but an inspiration as to their endurance in faith.

S., West Germany

The Definition of Eldership

IN MEMORIAM
IVAN M. KONTZEVITCH
1965-1980

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Matthew 13:44

THE POVERTY of the witness of true Christianity increases, the world grows darker, impiety at times already triumphs openly. Good impulses of the soul wither, sometimes without even being born. The generation of our fathers, having known in its experience of life the earth-shaking changes of the times, was confused and tempted. The majority of it, indeed, remained in this "unresolved" and indefinite state.

However, there were others. Faith in the righteousness of Christ's Church gave them strength and, with God's help, they withstood the temptation of a world undergoing the distortion of the Apostasy. They proved to be strong of spirit, and right up to now they conduct the ship of Christ, even being strengthened spiritually by the events of the times. With God's help they have preserved for us the fullness of that treasure for whose sake one should sell everything and, according to the Gospel, buy

the field of true spiritual life wherever it may be hidden. This treasure is Holy Orthodoxy, which opens the path to the Kingdom of Heaven; it does not change, but remains eternally as new as life itself.

Holy Trinity Monastery and its spiritual school, Holy Trinity Seminary, despite the comparatively short period of their existence, have acquired for themselves a very significant place in the history of 20th-century Orthodoxy by their preservation and defence of true Orthodox piety. One of the learned men who made his contribution to this effort was not physically present there for a long time, but in spirit was one with their work of enlightenment for Holy Orthodoxy – Ivan Michailovich Kontzevitch. This zealous defender and living representative of the witness of the Orthodox outlook has now departed to the other world. His memory is very dear to us, and we shall try here, as much as lies in our power, to give at least a brief outline of his life and theological works. His life's path is most interesting and can serve as an example of how to live a spiritual life in the world.

Ivan Michailovich served the Church outside the clergy ranks. His school was the renowned and great Optina. He was vouchsafed to see a saint face to face: he was the spiritual son of the last Optina Elder, Schema-hieromonk Nectarius, and he was able to be guided spiritually by this holy Elder for ten years after the historical disappearance of Holy Russia. As if hidden from the ways of this world by a lack of outward success in life, by the prayers of his holy Elder this laborer of God went on the narrow path. His talents and his higher education were entirely given over to the Lord, and when, having lived a long and pure life, he left it, we asked ourselves: Where are the fruits of his immense labors? However, according to the words of Bishop Theophan the Recluse: "The spiritual life is another world, into which human wisdom does not penetrate." After reading the following biography of our dear Ivan Michailovich, let the Orthodox Christian draw his own conclusion, in accordance with his own spiritual experience. As for us, deeply grateful to him for everything, we ask the reader to pray for his bright soul.

IVAN M. KONTZEVITCH

His Early Life and Searching

I. M. Kontzevitch was born in 1893, the oldest of five children. His father, Michael Ivanovich, graduated from the department of natural sciences in Warsaw University and remained at the university. He married and became the father of a family. Desiring to obtain better material conditions, he entered the Ministry of Finances and was transferred to the Baltic region as a tax inspector. Here he advanced to the highest ranks. His was a richly gifted nature.

In 1905, during a meeting in his office, he was standing and reading a report, being brightly illuminated by a lamp, when from the window opposite, overgrown by a grapevine, a shot rang out: someone had aimed at his head, but missed him by a hair.

His wife, Alexandra Ivanovna Lisenevskaya (in monasticism Mother Nectaria), was a Carpatho-Russian, the daughter of a judge, from a family known for its love of Russia. She graduated from secondary school in Warsaw and was married at a very young age. She was a born teacher and knew how to bring up children without punishments (unless a deliberately evil will should be revealed), making every question clear to them. Thus she was able from childhood to explain to her sons the harm of smoking, and they never smoked. Her talent and ability to teach was transmitted to her eldest son.

Ivan spent the early part of his childhood in Latvia. He loved to recall the enchanting impression left on him by the sea, the murmur of the pine forest, the sandy beach... His father was homesick for his native place, Poltava, and at a convenient opportunity he transferred to Mirgorod (a small town near Poltava). There was no suitable educational institution there, and the parents placed their eldest son in the Poltava Imperial Gymnasia, for which Alexandra Ivanovna prepared him splendidly. From that time on Ivan lived no more at home, coming home only on vacations.

He was a boy full of life, gifted with a rich imagination. During the Russo-Japanese War he modelled in clay a miniature of the Russian fleet, and he wrote tales for his brother, illustrating the text with drawings. When his father was transferred to Kremenchug, the boat ride and the voyage on the Dnepr took up all the leisure moments of his sons.

They were at home in the watery element, becoming fearless navigators. Ivan, at the time of the flood in Kremenchug, transported people in a rowboat from the flooded portions of the city. Not long before the beginning of the war in 1914, he graduated from the Gymnasia in Poltava and entered the mathematics department of the University of Kiev.

In the period before the First World War the Russian intelligentsia was far from the Church, and Ivan was no exception. He turned to searching, supposing that in man there are hidden powers which demand development. He began to study yoga. This did not last long.

The First World War broke out. At the same time there occurred an event that shook to the foundations the life of his family and led Ivan away for good from his ruinous errors. This event was the death of his brother, with whom he was bound by an extremely close and inseparable friendship. Vladimir was two years younger than he, but he surpassed Ivan both in his build and appearance and in his brilliant talents – he learned without any effort. He had an ideal personality, and there was no one who did not love him. He enlisted in the army. In the Carpathian Mountains, where his company was located, there was an enemy attack. It was necessary, in plain sight of the enemy companies, to cut the communications line. Lots were drawn to determine who would go to certain death. The lot did not fall to Vladimir, but, despite the officer's entreaty, he replaced one of the draftees and was killed. This occurred in Austria near Bochna on November 13.

The family's grief was indescribable. Alexandra Ivanovna literally turned to stone. It came into their minds to appeal to a certain Bykov, the former occultist and publisher of the periodical *The Spiritist*. But Bykov replied that he had renounced his former views and had now published a book on Orthodox monasteries called *Quiet Refuges for the Rest of the Suffering Soul*. Among others, there was an account in this book of Optina Monastery. Reading this, Ivan was fired with the desire to go there.

IVAN M. KONTZEVITCH

Optina

It was summer vacation, 1916. There were no more shoes in the stores; throwing off a characteristic feature of his life – to be always decently and neatly dressed – he set out in bark shoes. At the monastery they were about to take him for a Tolstoyite, but when the monks got to know him better they came to love him. As for Ivan, from the first day of his acquaintance with Optina to his very last breath, he lived by it and was faithful to it and what it stood for. He died on the eve of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, to whom was dedicated the main church of the Optina Skete of the Forerunner.

"The Monastery and the Elders," he wrote in his biography of the last Optina Elder, his spiritual father Nectarius, "produced on me an unexpected, irresistible impression, which is impossible to communicate in words; it can only be understood by experiencing it."

"Here one could clearly sense the grace of God, the sanctity of the place, the presence of God. This evoked a feeling of reverence and of responsibility for one's every thought, word, and action, a fear to fall into error, into deception, into self-trust and self-reliance.

"Such a state might be called 'walking before God.'

"Here for the first time the spiritual world was opened up to me, and as the antithesis to it I was shown the 'depths of satan.'

"Here I was spiritually reborn."

And immediately a wondrous world opened itself to the young God-seeker. At that time in Optina the Elders were Fr. Theodosius the Skete Superior, Fr. Anatole (Potapov), and Fr. Nectarius. Fr. Barsanuphius was no longer there. Ivan went every day to the skete to the Elders. In their cells he often heard the instructions which the Elders gave to those present. Thus once he was in the Skete with a group of young artists, among whom was the celebrated painter Bruni. Elder Theodosius gave him a whole speech on the meaning of art, and at the same time heaped censure on decadence and modernism. Elder Theodosius had the gift and ability of influencing educated young people.

His daily visits to the Skete were always instructive for Ivan Michailovich. But the Elders, occupied with the visitors who came to them

with all kinds of sorrows and dramas of the soul, did not give any special time to the young newcomer. They gave him "for education" to Father Joseph, a man experienced in spiritual life who had lived in Optina for decades. In the world he had been a bank director and a man of broad education. For the course of the two months he spent at Optina, often, after the church services, Ivan would be invited by Fr. Joseph to his cell. In conversation with him the spiritual world was opened up to the young student.

From Fr. Joseph, Ivan heard an incident from the life of Elder Ambrose which has not yet appeared in print Once Elder Ambrose, bent over and leaning on a cane, was walking on the path to Optina Monastery. Suddenly he saw before him a loaded wagon with a dead horse lying next to it and on it a peasant, weeping. The loss of a horse, one's means of livelihood, in the peasant way of life is a real catastrophe. Approaching the fallen horse, the Elder went around it slowly three times. Then, taking a switch, he lashed it, crying out to it: "Get up, lazybones!" And the horse obediently got on its feet.

Ivan wrote his mother that she should come to Optina, and she came there with the other children. After the church services they would spend time in the forest reading spiritual books. Thus the summer passed. The next year Ivan could spend only two weeks in Optina, but the spiritual bond with it remained forever. During the civil war Alexandra Ivanovna was unable to visit the monastery. When she came to Optina in 1922, both Elders, Frs. Anatole and Nectarius, and especially the latter, assured her that her eldest son was alive. Fr. Nectarius told her directly: "He is alive, pray for him as among the living; you will hear about him. Up to now it has not been necessary to know about him – submit to necessity." On returning home she received a letter from her son. After this she continued going to the monastery until it ceased to exist, and then to Elder Nectarius at the place of his banishment, until his very death. Through her, her son in the emigration enjoyed the guidance of the Elder for a number of years, and through him several who desired it had contact with the Elder. The letters of his mother served as material for Ivan's compilation of the life of Schema-hieromonk Nectarius.

Father Seraphim Zagorovsky

Kiev University, which Ivan had entered, was evacuated to the Volga region, and he preferred to transfer to Kharkov University. Thanks to a colleague, he was able to rent a room in the house of Fr. Nicholas Zagorovsky (in monasticism, Hieromonk Seraphim*). This priest was especially revered in the city as an ascetic, a man of prayer, and a remarkable preacher. Ivan constantly served in the altar for Fr. Nicholas and became known to many residents of Kharkov as a student who was close to the Church. This latter fact twice was of great benefit to Ivan

As a member of the White Army, Ivan was sent on an assignment to Kharkov. Several days remained free, and he wished, perhaps for the last time in his life (as indeed it was) to see his whole family together. His sister was studying in Kharkov. When they came to the train depot, the line at the ticket window was unbelievably long. A guard came up: "Didn't you serve in the altar for Fr. Nicholas?" "Yes, I did." The guard brought two tickets from the window. Thus Ivan saw his whole family together for the last time, said farewell to his parents, and received their blessing.

The second time was in Gallipoli. Ivan had left the hospital after two sieges of typhus. He was given two containers of sardines "for regaining his health;" that was all. He experienced an unbearable hunger and a terrible despondency, feeling that he would not survive and would die of exhaustion. In this tortuous state he was sitting once at the seashore. Past him walked a valiant soldier from the personal bodyguard of General Kutepov; his chest was covered with crosses and medals. "Didn't you serve in the altar for Father Nicholas?" "Yes, I did." "Come to me, let's remember the old times." It turned out that the son of this non-commissioned officer needed mathematics lessons. As payment for teaching, Ivan was given meals. The boy began soon to study well, and the teacher to get better.

Ivan left the fourth year of the mathematics department to join the White Army (to fight against the Communists). In the war he was saved

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*** For his life, see "The Orthodox Word," 1972, no. 45.**

twice from seemingly inevitable death. Once he was sitting at an observation point. The Communist cavalry of Budenny was heading straight for him. Unexpectedly and inexplicably the cavalry turned off to the side. Another time, when he was travelling on a munitions train, mines were placed in the tracks and the train began to explode. Instead of jumping out immediately, Ivan began to throw things out, until he himself was thrown out by the force of the explosion. He lay unconscious, badly bruised but no more than that.

During the civil war, being on leave, Ivan went to a monastery near Chersonese, where at that time lived Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, for whom he had great veneration. He was placed in a cell with Father Innocent, an Optina monk (who died in Brazil with the rank of Abbot), who taught him to carve wooden spoons such as were made in Optina. Dealing in these "Optina" spoons in the marketplaces of the Ukraine during his trip on the munitions train, Ivan earned his food by this means. He managed to escape the Crimea, beyond all expectations, on almost the last boat to leave.

In Gallipoli Ivan graduated from the Nicholas-Alexis Military Engineering School. All his grades were "A". Here he had the post of elder sub-ensign, successfully combining his natural sensitivity with the demands of military discipline. After his promotion to officer he ended up in Bulgaria, where he was digging tunnels. Having gathered together a little money, he went to study in France. In Bulgaria the wage for a whole day's work was equal to the cost of a single pound of sugar.

France: His Guidance by Elder Nectarius

In Paris he found work as an unloader at the merchandise station at Bourges. At this time (it was the period of the "New Economic Plan" in the Soviet Union) began his active correspondence with his mother. She was going constantly to Elder Nectarius, who from this time on began to guide every step of her son in the emigration. Here is an example:

At the unloading station at Bourges Ivan earned a promotion in his job, which for him then was a great achievement. Suddenly the Elder ordered him immediately to quit the job, or else "there will be a fine and

an arrest." Ivan, despite the difficulty of it, obeyed without a word. He was left without a salary or an apartment. This was the time when the Church was not yet divided into jurisdictions (before 1926).

Ivan was enthusiastically attracted by the idea of obtaining for the Church the little hill on the Rue de Crimee where soon the Theological Institute was established. In his spare time he went about collecting contributions for this. Looking over the building (once it had gotten underway), he discovered and came to love a place in the attic of one of the houses. It was a convenient spot for making living quarters. Ivan made a plan of the attic and sent it to Elder Nectarius, asking his blessing to settle there. The blessing was received. He went to Metropolitan Eulogius for permission, but was sent by him to the priest of the St. Sergius church. The latter laughed and said sarcastically: "Perhaps you would like me to settle you in my living room?" It was bitter and hurting that the Elder's blessing turned out to have no effect...

Meanwhile it happened that Ivan was walking with a friend, and in the heat of conversation they did not notice that they had gone too far. On the way they encountered an Orthodox bishop coming up from the subway. "This is Bishop Benjamin, the Inspector of the Academy," said his companion and left. Ivan went up for a blessing and accompanied the bishop. They talked for about an hour. The bishop asked: "Do you have any news from Russia?" Ivan had in his pocket the letter in which the Elder had blessed him to live in the attic. Soon Ivan received from the bishop the desired invitation; he wrote that the students had accepted him into their own family. The room in the attic was built with his money and by his own labor, and he lived in it for a long time while he was studying at the Sorbonne in the department of physics and mathematics.

The Elder absolutely insisted that Ivan should go to school without fail, and he said that the time of study would be accounted to him as prayer. He even allowed him, in case of necessity, to be absent from the Divine services, except for the twelve major feasts. At the same time he was strictly forbidden by the Elder to have any thoughts of accepting the monastic tonsure, quite unlike the case of his mother, whom the Elder ordered to prepare herself for the tonsure, and also of his younger brother,

who is now a bishop (Bishop Nektary of Seattle). However, the life of Ivan Michailovich proceeded just as in the strictest monastic cell.

Eight years passed in finishing the Sorbonne and the Ecole Superieure d'Electricite. Being a very talented physicist, he prepared his colleagues and explained to them how to conduct experiments. They, having scholarships or independent means, were able to finish the course before him.

The Elder entered into all details of Ivan's life. Thus, he blessed him to choose as his confessor Fr. George Spasski. He also forbade him to receive women in his room. Even his colleague in both educational institutions, the modest Catherine Vyacheslavova, he received in the street when she came to ask help in studying. Living in Paris, he attended neither theaters nor concerts nor other entertainments. Once he took a job in an opera as a silent performer, playing an ancient Russian soldier, but despite the fact that, as a student, he was quite in need of the money, he felt the reproach of his conscience and refused to do it again

The severe, ascetic conditions of his life were not in the least reflected in his bright character. He had an inborn subtle humor – not for nothing was his homeland the heart of Poltava, where the heroes of Gogol lived! Goodhearted, sharp-witted, and entirely harmless humor was a part of him; but he had not the slightest trace of sarcasm. At the same time, he had to the marrow of his bones an artistic temperament; he felt and understood the harmony of colors. He revealed this nearer to his old age, when he blossomed in soul, or rather, matured completely, and his whole life, filled with continence, began to bear fruit.

The serious scientific education which he completed brought him no material success whatever in life. It only gave him a broad mental development and tempered his character. This evidently was precisely what the Elder intended for him.

When finally he had his diplomas, there began in France a period of a surplus of engineers. He found work in bringing electricity to the obscure, primitive towns of France. Composing projects and plans, often wandering in the mountains, he had not the least comfort. Only during the Second World War did this work come to an end.

In 1935 Ivan Michailovich married. His wife Helene became his inseparable helper, and a writer herself. She was the niece of Sergei Nilus, who discovered and deciphered Motovilov's manuscript detailing his conversation with St. Seraphim of Sarov on the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. Nilus spent years in Constantine Leontiev's house in Optina, being under the spiritual guidance of Elder Barsanuphius. There he compiled a series of books taken from manuscripts in the Optina library, the most outstanding of which was the autobiography of the Optina elder Theodosius.

The first thing they did was to buy the twelve volumes of the Lives of Saints and obtain visas for visiting the Holy Land. But it happened that his wife was unable to leave. So as not to waste his "wedding vacation," he decided to go alone to Mt. Athos. But the boat on which he was to sail on a certain day was unexpectedly sold, and the money for the ticket was refunded; there were no other boats.

His Theological Contribution: The Definition of Eldership

While Elder Nectarius was still alive, he advised Ivan Michailovich to combine study at the Sorbonne with attendance at lectures in the Theological Institute. At that time, however, he could not do this. But when, during the war, this opportunity presented itself, he seized it. Entering the Institute, he strove, in addition to obtaining theological knowledge, to develop in himself the ability to write well. When he turned in his first written work, Professor A. V. Kartashev addressed him in a flattering way, recommending that he write and not bury his talent in the ground.

In finishing the Institute, Ivan Michailovich turned in a dissertation consisting of two parts: 1) Eldership, and 2) The path to it. This subject was of vital interest to him. He wished to find a precise theological definition of the essence of authentic eldership and its place in the Church. He understood that there were two separate concepts not to be confused: elder and spiritual father. In his dissertation he could not yet

give an exhaustive answer; but for this essay his scholarship was continued, with the intention that he would write a book.

This book was published in Paris in 1952 under the title: *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia.* In it the author showed the spiritual bond between ancient Russia and Byzantium and the other Eastern lands that had received Byzantine culture, where there was a blossoming of the traditions and heritage of the Orthodox ascetics and where Patristic literature reigned. Numerous ascetics of Holy Russia were constantly travelling to the East and kept alive the spiritual tie with this great Orthodox culture until the invasion of the Turks. After this the grace-giving source dried up... The character of ascetic struggle was altered and became more difficult.

While working on this book Ivan Michailovich searched through all the libraries of Paris. K. N. Leontiev had written on eldership in his book *Father Clement Sederholm.* The above-mentioned S. A. Nilus wrote in detail on it. Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov came closer than others to this question: he distinguished the features of authentic eldership from false eldership, which he castigated mercilessly, calling it "play-acting." Finally, Prof. Smirnov in the *Theological Herald* devoted a learned work to this subject. But no one had given a direct answer to the question Ivan Michailovich had asked.

During the earliest centuries of Christianity such a definition was not needed: eldership was not a secret for anyone. In those times, when a certain elder punished a monk by forbidding him to eat bread, and then himself died, the local council that gathered did not consider itself to have the right to loose the elder's interdiction. At that time there were no conflicts between the authority of elders and that of apostles.

But when, with the fall of Byzantium, Patristic literature fell into disuse, and later, when Western influence began to penetrate, the Patristic teaching was almost forgotten. Eldership was restored to something of its former state at the end of the 18th century by Schema-Archimandrite Paisius Velichkovsky, but it was received in many places as a novelty. Elders like St. Seraphim of Sarov, Schema-Hieromonk Lev of Optina, Schema-Hieromonk Ambrose, and others were persecuted.

After the Revolution, when the Russian intelligentsia began to turn to God, many became priests, and some imagined themselves to be elders. These "young elders," as someone has called them, have brought much harm to their spiritual children. There was even a case of suicide. Ivan Michailovich knew this.

In addition, there was a case that affected him closely. He had a friend who possessed an uncommon mind and the gift of words. Elder Nectarius blessed him to enter the Institute. While the question of a scholarship was pending, this friend began an independent business which immediately turned into a gold mine. Meanwhile the scholarship was awarded to him. He didn't want to abandon his successful business. He decided to turn to Bishop Benjamin, asking him to remove from him the Elder's command. He spent a long time in conversation with him. He left the bishop no longer himself, changed, downcast, – however he received what he wanted. But from this moment the "gold mine" failed. His whole life went off the track... The bishop had no right to alter the Elder's command, the direct will of God. Ivan Michailovich knew this clearly; but how could he prove it?

This book, which appeared in 1952 (*The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia*) as the first volume of his planned work, did not yet give an exhaustive reply to this question. A year later, in America, when Ivan Michailovich was teaching a course in Patrology in Holy Trinity Seminary, he wrote a biography of Elder Nectarius; the answer was found and given in the introduction to this work, where he defines eldership as the *prophetic ministry* in the Church. Here is how Ivan Michailovich writes of this in the introduction to the above-mentioned work:

"The Apostle Paul enumerates three ministries in the Church, independent of the church hierarchy: apostles, prophets, teachers (Eph. 4: 11, I Cor. 12:28). Immediately after the apostles stand prophets. Their ministry consists primarily of 'edification, exhortation, and comfort' (I Cor. 14:3). With this aim, and also for pointing out or warning, prophets also predict future events.

"Through the prophet, the will of God is immediately revealed; and therefore his authority is limitless.

"The prophetic ministry is a special gift of grace, a gift of the Holy Spirit (charisma). The prophet possesses a special spiritual vision – clairvoyance. For him the boundaries of space and time are, as it were, set aside; with his spiritual gaze he sees not only events that are occurring now, but also future events. He sees their spiritual meaning; he sees the soul of man, his past and future.

"Such a high calling cannot but be bound up with a high moral level, with purity of heart, with personal sanctity. Sanctity of life, indeed, was required of the prophet from the first period of Christianity: 'He must have the manner of the Lord. From his manner may be distinguished the false prophet and the (true) prophet,' says one of the oldest works of Christian literature, the *Didache* (*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*).

"The ministries enumerated by the Apostle Paul have been preserved in the Church in all ages. The ministries of apostle, prophet, and teacher, being independent, may be combined with the rank of bishop or priest.

"The prophetic ministry, bound up with personal sanctity, has flourished when spiritual life in the Church was high, and has declined in decadent periods. Most brightly of all is it manifested in monastic eldership. Being a direct continuation of the prophetic ministry, it appeared under this name and in this form only in the 4th century, together with the arising of monasticism, as its guiding principle...

"Those who give themselves over entirely to the guidance of a true elder experience a special feeling of joy and freedom in the Lord. The writer of these lines has experienced this personally. An elder is the immediate carrier of the will of God. Communion with God is always bound up with a feeling of spiritual freedom, joy, and indescribable peace in the soul. On the contrary, a false elder eclipses God by means of himself, placing his own will in place of God's will, something which is bound up with a feeling of slavery, oppression, and almost always, despondency.* In addition, the entire submission of a disciple to a false

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*** However, it is characteristic of spiritual deception that such negative feelings may not appear at once, and a false sense of fevered "joy" may be a part of the**

elder corrodes his personality, destroys his will, corrupts his sense of justice and rightness, and thus takes from him the awareness of responsibility for his acts.

"Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov has written thus concerning false eldership: 'It is a frightful thing to accept the responsibilities (of eldership), which may be fulfilled only by command of the Holy Spirit, when contact with satan has not yet been broken off and one's vessel does not cease to be defiled by the activity of satan (that is, dispassion has not yet been attained). Such imposture and play-acting is terrible. It is ruinous for oneself and for one's close ones; it is criminal before God and blasphemous' (Bp. Ignatius, *Works*, St. Petersburg, 1860, vol. 4, p. 92)."

Ivan Michailovich developed further his ideas on "false eldership," which he considered very symptomatic of our age of spiritual decline, in the first chapter of his posthumously published book, *Optina and Its Era*:

"False eldership evokes a *hypnosis of ideas*. And since a false idea lies at the root, this idea evokes a spiritual blindness. When the false idea overshadows reality, no arguments whatever are accepted, since they hit against the fixed idea which is considered an immovable axiom.**

"A man moves forward like a sleepwalker, until he hits his forehead against a wall. He shatters his own head, and often that of one bound up with him. A similar catastrophe overtakes the adherents of false eldership. This is why among them there are such frequent incidents of suicide and every kind of despair...

"When true elders, one may say, no longer exist, people who thirst to find spiritual support for themselves choose some spiritual per-

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deception of submitting to a false elder; in that case, the despondency is revealed later (tr. note).

** **Abundant evidence of this phenomenon may be seen in many of today's cults: the follower of the cult leader mindlessly repeats the teachings and phrases he has been taught by a kind of "brainwashing," with no ability to discuss them rationally or to test them by contact with reality. What the leader says overshadows reality, and the leader himself takes the place of God. An extreme example of this may be seen in the mass suicide at "Jonestown" in 1978 (tr. note).**

son whom for some reason they find sympathetic, and they say: 'I act towards him as towards an elder.' If the spiritual father is sober and spiritually honest, he sharply declines such a relationship. But how many there are who willingly fall into the net laid out for them. For this 'play-acting,' in the expression of Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, leads the self-appointed elder to spiritual death. He himself loses the ground under his feet and goes by crooked ways, losing everything that he has gathered and obtained in his life up to then.

"The true relationship of an elder to his disciple is called in ascetic literature a 'spiritual mystery;' it is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But every kind of imitation and falsification are manifestations from the left side. If the former path leads to life, the latter, if a man does not come to himself in time, casts him into a total disorder of spiritual life which has as its end every kind of catastrophe" (*Optina and Its Era*, pp. 12-13).

Concerning true eldership, Ivan Michailovich continues:

"The influence of eldership extended far beyond the boundaries of a monastery's walls. Elders spiritually guided not only monks, but also laymen. Possessing the gift of clairvoyance, they edified, exhorted, and comforted everyone (I Cor. 14:3); they healed illnesses of soul and body, warned against dangers, indicated the path of life, revealed the will of God.

"In recent times in Russia eldership especially flourished in Optina Monastery" (*Orthodox Way* for 1952, Jordanville, pp. 42-45).

Ivan Michailovich's definition and discussion of eldership is most valuable for our own times, when true God-bearing elders have entirely vanished, but false elders are as abundant as ever. (Those who are still called "elders" in today's monasteries, if they are honest, will be the first to say that they are only trying to be simple spiritual fathers and could never pretend to the awesome responsibilities of true God-bearing elders such as Optina had.)

When Ivan Michailovich came in 1952 to Holy Trinity Seminary, he was invited to teach a course in Patrology to the students. In the following year, 1953, in the lectures he composed, he tried to open up to his hearers a broader view of the teaching of the Holy Fathers on ascetic

struggle, the inward work which is crowned by the grace of the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.

His Last Years

In the next year Ivan Michailovich moved to San Francisco to be near his brother and sister, whom before his arrival in America he had not seen for 35 years. Here he wrote a remarkable book: *The Sources of the Spiritual Catastrophe of L. N. Tolstoy.* This book was published before the religious events of the present day, which have shaken the contemporary world. But everything that is occurring today on a world-wide level was depicted beforehand, as in a little mirror, in the personal life of Tolstoy.

The penetrating author of the book on Tolstoy, when he was writing it in the mid-1950's, turned his careful attention precisely to the manifestations which, ten years later, have so quickly and unexpectedly blossomed like a double flower: first, the "post-Christianity" preached by Tolstoy (in a letter to the artist Jan Styk he calls himself a former Christian); and second, the desire to create a pan-religion out of all existing beliefs. Enthusiasm is growing, indeed, for the syncretic religion of Bahai, which was born in Asia and has passed over to America, where on Lake Michigan its adepts have built a temple which attracts 100,000 visitors a year. The evil genius of Tolstoy was really a genius, if it could predict and manifest beforehand with such precision the spirit of the coming epoch. It only remains now that the Eastern religions, which were in such favor with Tolstoy, should assume a leading place in the world – which indeed they are now beginning to do.

Besides this very important work, Ivan Michailovich gave a number of lectures in this period. With special love and care, which were in general a part of his character, he gave lectures to the San Francisco circle of the St. Vladimir Youth organization. At these gatherings, which were attended not only by young people, he gave several lectures devoted to a favorite subject of his: the letters of Elder Macarius of Optina to laymen. This was an indispensable book for him; it was inseparable from him, and he would read it as a treasury of spiritual wisdom in all inci-

dents of life when advice was needed, when some question had to be understood, or when the soul was simply hungry for spiritual food. Ivan Michailovich labored much at devising a system arranging the atterances of the Elder by subjects.

He wrote many articles, of which only a certain part was published during his lifetime. He also labored and thought much on his book on Optina, which was to be a continuation of *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit*.* The outlines of many proposed articles of his have been preserved.

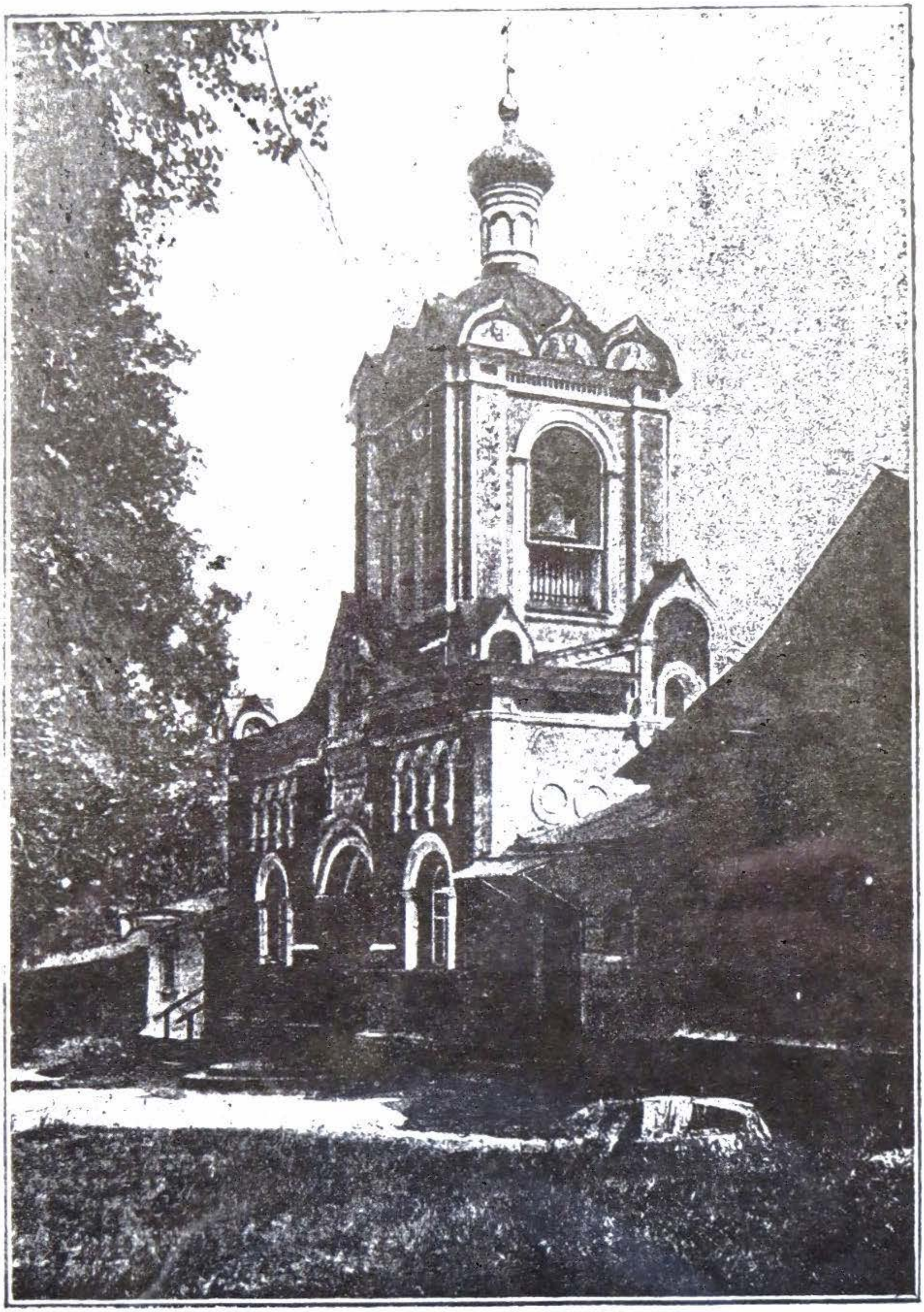
A year before his death Ivan Michailovich had a serious operation, After this he gradually lost strength, but his spirit remained as alert as ever; it seemed that spiritually he was stronger than ever. After Pascha, 1965, he began clearly to waste away, but he finally took to his bed, out of complete weakness, only just before his very death, which occurred on July 6 (June 23, O.S.) at 6:30 p.m. He endured great sufferings in silence, without complaining, courageously, in submission to the will of God.

For the last two weeks of his life he received Holy Communion every day. "Will I suffer for long?" – the words burst from him on his death bed; but he immediately answered himself: "Let me suffer longer, that it might be better for me in the Kingdom of Heaven." Surrounded by the icons with which he had been blessed by Elders Nectarius and Anatole and which were now held constantly by his wife, brother, and sister, who took turns at his bedside, Ivan Michailovich quietly, as if falling asleep, departed to the other world. A barely noticeable smile was impressed on his lips. A humble man who always kept himself outside the center of attention, he was granted a triumphant burial: his funeral service was celebrated by three bishops (Archbishop John Maximovitch, Bishop Nektary, and Bishop Savva) and six other clergymen.

A life devoted to the acquisition of the field of spiritual life, for the sake of the treasure hidden in it, came to an end. Ivan Michailovich

(Continued on page 293)

*** This book appeared after the author's death: "Optina and Its Era," Jordanville, 1970.**



Optina Monastery: belfry over the entrance gate
at the Skete of St. John the Baptist

Prof. I.M. Kontzevitch with his wife Helene at their icon corner, 1948.

Elder Nectarius of Optina

(Continued from page 290)
resolutely and unsparingly labored, but did not harvest the fruits. Evidently he was to receive the fruits in the other life.

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force (Matt. 11:12).

HIS MAJOR THEOLOGICAL WORKS

(In Russian, with translations as noted.)

BOOKS:

The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia, Paris, 1952. (Portions translated into English to form the Introduction to *The Northern Thebaid*, St. Herman Brotherhood, Platina, Ca., 1975.)

Schema-Hieromonk Nectarius, Last Elder of Optina, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, N.Y., 1953

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Optina and Its Era, Jordanville, 1970.

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ARTICLES IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

"St. John of Kronstadt and the Spiritual Crisis of Russia," in *The Orthodox Word*, 1965, nos. 2 and 5.

"*Prelest*: The Teaching of the Holy Fathers on Spiritual Deception," in *The Orthodox Word*, 1965, no. 4.

"Antichrist," in *Orthodox Life*, 1979.

"Father Nicholas Zagorovsky," in *The Orthodox Word*, 1972, no. 45.

(Most of his articles remain untranslated.)

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